

# Anti-Masonry, And Our Response

Wallace McLeod

Virginia Research Lodge No. 1777

June 27th, 1998

## INTRODUCTION

Worshipful Master, Distinguished Masons, and my Brethren: let me begin by saying how very grateful I am to your Secretary, Wor. Brother Keith A. Hinerman, for inviting me to be with you today, and for arranging all the details of my visit with such thoughtful care. And he has been so good to us on our previous visits!

Actually, as your Lodge circular notes, this is the third time that I have been privileged to address Virginia Research Lodge. The first was fourteen years ago (on June 23, 1984), when I talked about "The Sufferings of John Coustos." Then, just five years ago (on June 26, 1993), I spoke on "The Evolution of the Masonic Ritual." Those times now seem like a different age. In both of my earlier visits, I came at the invitation of my dear friend, mentor, and editor, the late Allen Earl Roberts, who died on March 13, 1997, in his 80th year. In the words of John J. Robinson, Allen was "the most prolific author, perhaps in all of Masonic history." He was certainly the most effective educator. He saw what American Masons needed, and then went ahead and gave it to them. He did so much for Masonry, wrote so many indispensable Masonic books, produced so many superb Masonic moving pictures. And many of his publications are still available, at very reasonable prices, from the firm that he founded, Anchor Communications. And of course he was Master of Virginia Research Lodge, No 1777, in 1965-67, and served as its Secretary from 1973 to 1996. When comes such another? We all miss him. But life goes on.

## OUR TOPIC FOR TODAY

Believe it or not, I spent a fair bit of time brooding about what I ought to say to you today. The problem is that I am, primarily, an historian, and I am accustomed to looking at events of the past. But today many Masonic students are meditating on the future. In some ways, Freemasonry, which we think of as unchangeable, has in fact been changing. And many students are pondering the effect of these alterations. Let me remind you of a few details.

(1) The decrease in racial prejudice, and the raising of tolerance towards Black Freemasonry since 1989. I note that Virginia, like my home jurisdiction, has not yet extended recognition to Prince Hall Masonry.

(2) Changing the wording of our ceremonies, in order to defuse criticisms that are leveled against us by outsiders. Thus, in England, and elsewhere, some Grand Lodges have removed the traditional bloody penalties from our obligations.

(3) Cutting down the amount of memorization that is required of candidates. In some jurisdictions this has already been introduced; after all, we are told, many people are so busy these days that they don't have time to sit down and memorize vast amounts of verbiage.

(4) "Classes" for Masons, where; instead of one candidate being taken through one degree at a time, we have groups of 20 or 30 more, having all three degrees conferred upon them in a single day. (This, we are told, will enable those people to become members who in the past have been too busy to follow traditional route into Masonry).

(5) The possibility of involving our wives and families more closely in Freemasonry. After all, in these days of female liberation, and working wives, we can hardly expect the mother of the household to let her husband wander off on his own too frequently.

(6) The effect of computers, with the World Wide Web and e-mail. These have made communication so much faster. It used to be that if something happened in

connection with Freemasonry in England, we wouldn't hear about it for several months, or even years. But now word will reach us on the very next day. Is there any way in which this technology can supersede actual live face-to-face meetings? I mean, we have a Chapter of the Philalethes Society called the Cornerstone Computer Chapter, that "meets" on the Web. And I understand that there is also a Lodge newly formed in England that plans to "meet" by e-mail.

(7) And a related matter. The Web makes vast amounts of information readily available. There are over a hundred Websites devoted to Freemasonry. And for those who have computers, even if they are not on the Web, the Philalethes Society has just issued a CD-ROM that contains all the articles published in the first fifty years of the magazine.

Before we go any further, I had better confess that I am not conservative in several of the matters we have just mentioned — if not reactionary. I do believe that there is such a thing as "male bonding." The links of fellowship that can arise in a purely male environment unique; and such a group has a very different atmosphere from what you find in an organization that includes both sexes. (I suppose that the reason must be that the hormones are far older than any veneer of civilization). Mind you, I wouldn't go as far as Robert Bly in his nutty book **Iron John** of a few years ago (1990). But I always call Freemasonry an affinity group. It consists of a number of men of moral standards, whose tenets or fundamental principles are Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth, and who have shared certain deeply moving experiences.

And I am not alone in this belief. In the issue of Time magazine for May 25, 1998, there is an article on Freemasonry. And there friend, John Mauk Hilliard of New York, is quoted as saying, "This elusive male bonding that people try to recover sitting in sweat lodges and drumming, the Masons have had it for generations. They never lost it."

I still agree with two great Masons of a generation or so ago, Carl H. Claudy (The Master's Book, 1935, page 18) and Dwight L. Stith (Whither are We Traveling? 1962, page 56). They both said:

"One thing and only one thing a Masonic Lodge can give its members that they can get nowhere else in the world. That one thing is Masonry."

These remarks will probably enable you to predict what my reaction would be to some of the innovations that I mentioned a few minutes ago.

## PUBLIC VIEW OF MASONRY: THE EARLY YEARS

But my main topic today will be to look at the people who criticize Freemasonry, and to discuss some of their criticisms. From the very beginning there have been those who were hostile to Masonry. They cited various pretexts for their dislike, and we might mention some of them, just to show that there is nothing new under the sun.

There was of course criticism on religious grounds. For example, in 1698, nineteen years before the foundation of the first Grand Lodge, a printed leaflet was distributed, containing the following words: "To all godly people, in the city of London: Having thought it needful to warn you of the Mischiefs and Evils practiced in the Sight of God by those called Freed Masons, I say take Care lest their Ceremonies and secret swearings take hold of you... For this devilish Sect of Men are Meeters in secret... They are the Anti-Christ which was to come leading Men from Fear of God."

But the Masons were also condemned on grounds of morality, both for excessive drinking, and for sexual promiscuity. Thus, a poem published in London in 1723 says of The Freemasons, "they drink, carouse, like any Bacchus, And swallow strongest Wines that rack us." A few lines later, the same poem goes on to say that "Sally Dear's the Fav'rite

Toast, Whose Health it is they drink the most," and the author explains in a footnote that this is a reference to "Sally Salisbury, the noted prostitute."

In early days the Craft was criticized as well for its secrecy. This would of course provide a cloak for immorality and indecency; but there were also those who said that we were secretly dabbling in forbidden areas of politics. Thus, in 1732, the Mayor of Canterbury suspected that the Masons were engaging in "Practices against the Peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity," and he issued a proclamation denouncing them, and appealing for further formation.

Let me remind you that these examples are more than two hundred and fifty years old. Indeed, it all has a depressingly familiar sound.

#### MORE RECENT CRITICS: (1) OPPORTUNISTS

Now let's leap ahead two and a half centuries. We still have our critics. We might divide them into three categories. One large group are what I should call opportunists — people who see that there is a ready market for sensationalist attacks on Masonry, and decide to make their fortunes out of it. In recent years, the first of these, and the one who did us the most harm, was a journalist named Stephen Knight. In 1976 he published a small book called **Jack the Ripper — The Final Solution**. In it he alleged that the heir presumptive to the throne of Britain in Queen Victoria's time, the Duke of Clarence, had got involved with a lower class girl and fathered a child. In order to keep the disgrace a secret, a number of women of the street were murdered, and the leaders of the conspiracy were the Masons. In 1979, this marvelous story was made into a movie called **Murder by Decree**, with Christopher Plummer playing the role of Sherlock Holmes, and Sir Anthony Quayle as Sir Charles Warren, a senior police officer, and the first Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge.

Well, it didn't take Stephen Knight long to realize that there was money to be made from attacking the Masons; so in 1984 he came out with a second book, called *The Brotherhood*. It disclosed how there were secret networks of Masons, committed to helping each other in the law-courts, in the police force, in the army, in politics, in the educational world, and even in the church; and it told how the Russian secret service, the KGB, had infiltrated the Masons, and made use of its connections for its own devious purposes.

## (2) NETWORKING AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Now the second group of critics is those who say that we join the fraternity in order to get ahead in life, because the Masons engage in what might be called networking, and those of high rank are obligated to assist their subordinates. On January 8, 1995, the beloved American television cartoon family, **The Simpsons**, featured an episode called "Homer the Great," in which Father became Master of a Secret Society. It showed, among other things, that if you had the proper Masonic connections, you could get more expensive office equipment, and a better parking spot at your place of work.

Actually, Masonry is sometimes accused of being part of a worldwide conspiracy to take over the world. There is a gossip magazine in Canada called **Frank**, and in the issue dated just ten days ago (No 274, June 17, 1998), it tells us about a man (Glenn Kealey) who is "putting the finishing touches on his research into a global conspiracy orchestrated by the Freemasons and an ancient tribe of mutants living beneath the ice in Greenland (we're not making this up! —ed.)."

One of Stephen Knight's slurs had been that the Masons actually ran the government, and ruled certain municipalities as their own. As a result there were reactions in Britain: attempts to find out just which Members of Parliament were Masons, and investigations into the government of the Borough of Hackney in London. In Parliament it appears that even Mrs. Thatcher was asked if she belonged to the Order of the Eastern Star. Then, in

the United States there was the problem of Judge David B. Sentelle, who in 1987 was named by President Reagan to the United States Court of Appeals. His confirmation was held up for quite a while in the Senate, while some of the Senators investigated the possibility that he could not be impartial, because he was, after all, a Mason.

In August 1996 there was quite an uproar in Britain, because Sir Frederick Crawford had been appointed as the first chairman of the new Criminal Cases Review Commission, and it became known that he was a Mason. Obviously, the critics said, he was obliged to do his utmost to extenuate the conduct of those police officers that were Freemasons, even if they were "justly liable to reprehension and blame" (Glasgow Herald, August 16, 1996). On February 18, 1998, it was reported that the British government was going to demand that all Freemasons, who work as Judges, Magistrates, Police Officers, Prison Officers, and Probation Officers, must be publicly identified. This is being demanded by Rt. Hon. Jack Straw, M.P., the Home Secretary. "He said that if he doesn't get voluntary compliance, the Government will pass a law compelling them to reveal lodge membership." And in fact "Parliament's home affairs committee... conducted hearings into Freemason membership on three police forces responsible for well-known miscarriages of justice. Michael Higham, a former Naval Commander who is the Grand Secretary of the London-based United Grand Lodge, ... acknowledged about 20 names on a list only after being threatened with a contempt-of-Parliament order" (Warren Hoge, in The New York Times, March 9, 1998; **Philaethes** 51.2 [April 1998] 28).

In October 1993, many households in Toronto received an 8-page tabloid newspaper called the "**Michael**" **Journal** (published by The Pilgrims of Saint Michael, in Rougemont, Quebec). It was devoted to exposing the conspiracy of the International Bankers — which includes the Masons.

This article was picked up by a columnist in the weekly Toronto tabloid Eye for January 27, 1994; she telephoned the number that was given for the Pilgrims of St Michael, and had a talk with Peter (last name unknown), their representative. He told her, "The Masons

control the world's banks; and the poor people who don't know any better, they go along with it. They control the universities, the schools, the newspapers, and all the rest.... They create wars and depressions where millions die; they are the cause of it. To say that they are vampires is not strong enough."

### (3) RELIGIOUS CRITICISM: (a) CATHOLIC

But there is a third group that condemns the Craft on grounds that are not political. In 1738 Pope Clement XII issued a Papal Decree that ran in part like this: "By virtue of the Holy Obedience, we strictly enjoin the Faithful in Christ, all and singular,... that no one, under any pretext or excuse whatsoever, venture or presume to enter into the...Societies known by the name of [Free Masons], ... under penalty of Excommunication, to be incurred automatically without proclamation." The Pope singled out two features of Free Masonry that were offensive; its religious tolerance, and its oath of secrecy. But beyond the two explicit reasons, we are told, the ban was imposed "for other just and reasonable causes known to us." That was 1738. The condemnation was renewed and reiterated by a number of popes over the years. It had a couple of effects.

In Italy, because of this condemnation, the Masons came to be equated with unbelievers. This notion even finds its way into Ernest Hemingway's novel, **A Farewell to Arms**, where two young Italian officers are talking. One of them, the major, says, "All thinking men are atheists;" (and then, as if they were the same thing, he goes on) "I do not believe in the Free Masons however." "I believe in the Free Masons," the lieutenant said. "It is a noble organization."

The authority of the church naturally fostered a venomous hostility towards Freemasonry on the part of many Catholics. The lack of substance in the accusations has roused sorrow in the hearts of many Masons. No doubt some of them tired of turning the other cheek, and lashed out with equal intolerance. Regular Masonry's official response has always



been, "Let a man's religion, or mode of worship, be what it may, he is not excluded from the Order, provided he believe in the Architect of Heaven and Earth."

After the Second Vatican Council in 1962-65, a new spirit of ecumenism was abroad in the Roman Catholic Church. There were encouraging signs of a softening in the traditional attitudes to Freemasonry. In 1974, the Vatican, through Cardinal Seper, sent the following letter to Cardinal Krol of Philadelphia. "The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith... has ruled that Canon 2335 no longer automatically bars a Catholic from membership of Masonic groups... And so a Catholic who joins the Freemasons is excommunicated only if the policy and action of the Freemasons in his area are known to be hostile to the Church."

After that official pronouncement, a number of Catholics, with the permission of their priests, began to join Masonry. Then a new pontiff was elected, with different attitudes. And on 26 November 1983, Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Teaching of the Faith, issued a declaration: "The Church's negative opinion about Masonic lodges continues unchanged... Enrollment in them remains prohibited by the Church. The Faithful in Christ who give their names to Masonic Lodges are in a state of grave sin and cannot attend Holy Communion."

There are a number of Roman Catholic Freemasons, some of them who joined quite a while ago, and others who came in during the official thaw from the 1960s to 1983. For my part, I am delighted welcome them into the Craft, an organization that binds together men of all religions. But there are difficulties for some of them, because they are not aware of the present position of their Church.

The problem does not go away. On March 22, 1996, in the Southern Nebraska Register (the official newspaper of the Lincoln Nebraska Diocese), Bishop Fabian Bruskewitz, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Lincoln, Nebraska, condemned twelve organizations, including Freemasonry. All Roman Catholics in the Diocese who did of resign their membership in

such organizations were "under interdiction" as of April 15, and excommunicated as of May 15, 1996.

## (b) EVANGELICALS

But the most vociferous religious anti-Masons are the Christian fundamentalist evangelicals. There is a whole regiment of them, whose names should be familiar to you. For example, in 1980 a book was published by Salem Kirban, and distributed by Morris Cerullo World Evangelism; its title is **Satan's Angels Exposed...** And there you will find them all: the Fabian Society, the Bilderbergers, the Tri-lateral Commission, the Unification Church, the Illuminati — and the Freemasons. The author says, "The basic ideologies of Masonry... make it incompatible with Christianity" (page 140).

Then there is John Ankerberg, who in April 1985 presented a TV series from Chattanooga, Tennessee, with the title, "Christianity and the Masonic Lodge: Are they compatible?" (The obvious answer was no).

The New York Review of Books, for February 2, 1995, discussed a publication called **The New World Order**, written by Pat Robertson. The author is an evangelical minister, who in 1960 founded the Christian (Television) Broadcasting Network. On September 26 or 27, 1985, when Hurricane Gloria threatened the Virginia Coast, he turned it aside by praying. He ran for President of the United States in 1988. In his book he misquotes Albert Pike as saying; "The Masonic Religion should be ... maintained in the purity of the Luciferian doctrine. Yes, Lucifer is God." A small pocket-sized comic book by Jack T. Chick, **The Curse of Baphomet** (copyrighted 1991), states: "Masonry is a dark spiritual force, blending all ungodly religion... When a Christian joins this form of Baal worship, he brings spiritual death to his church and family."

But now let us remind you of a major crisis that took place in the United States just five years ago. This involved the Southern Baptist Convention, and the notorious anti-Mason,

Dr. James L. Holly, a medical practitioner from Beaumont, Texas, who tried to persuade the Convention to condemn Freemasonry.

This situation actually prompted a major change in the Craft, the realization of an idea proposed by our own Allen Roberts nearly thirty years ago. In 1969, in his book, *Key to Freemasonry's Growth*, had talked about the necessity of having a "clearing house" for Masonic information, which would cut down the amount of needless duplication of effort from one jurisdiction to another. The idea was regarded with suspicion in some quarters, because it seemed to be an infringement of the independence, the autonomy, of the individual and lodges. Allen kept on talking about the idea, to such high-powered groups as the Annual York Rite Assembly, and the Conference of Grand Masters — all to no effect. Finally, he spoke to John Robinson, of Ohio, about it, and that did the job. When John published his last book, **A Pilgrim's Path**, he made arrangements that 5.00 out of the purchase price of every copy should be devoted to a Center for Masonic Information. The Center was formed in February 1993. It operates out of the offices of the Masonic Service Association (8120 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910, U.S.A.).

In preparation for the Southern Baptist Convention, it mailed it 35,000 copies of the issue of the Scottish Rite Journal that was subtitled "Freemasonry and Religion." And it held organizational meetings, and developed a brochure called "Facts About Freemasonry," which was quite persuasive.

On June 15, 1993 the Southern Baptist Convention was called to session in Houston, Texas, with nearly 18,000 delegates in attendance. On June 16, they voted, apparently by a margin of about 9 to 1, in favor of leaving the decision about Masonry up to personal conscience. This was certainly a defeat for Holly and the conservatives, and at one level it can count as a victory for Freemasonry. But in its report to the Convention, the Home Mission Board included eight specific criticisms of the Craft: (1) it uses religious terms that are offensive, such as "Worshipful," and "temple," (2) it includes bloody oaths; (3) it accepts as authorities works that are pagan and/or occultic, such as Albert Pike, and

Albert Mackey; (4) it refers to the Bible as furniture," on the same terms as the Square and Compasses; (5) it refers to Masonic knowledge as "Light," when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world;" (6) it says that one can obtain salvation by good works; (7) it accepts all religions as equally valid, and allows believers to pray with non-believers; (8) at least in the United States, it is racist. These are charges worth remembering.

Anyway, since the formation of the Information Center, it has continued to issue useful publications, letters, leaflets, and brochures. Perhaps the most valuable is a booklet dealing with the lies of the Anti-Masons, **Is It True What They Say about Freemasonry?** written by two thorough and dependable Masonic scholars, Art de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris.

## HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

Now let me offer my own views on how we should respond to our detractors. We think of the Craft as a kindly, benign, moral institution, supporting a brother's personal religion without in any way supplanting it, forbidding all controversy on political or religious topics. But it appears that this Dr. Jekyll personality has a darker, Mr. Hyde, aspect to it. If most of the things that are said about us are true, then no man of integrity can ever remain in our ranks.

That's the problem, isn't it? Those of us who are associated with Masonry know that all these charges are lies, but we don't do very much to refute them. On the whole, we as Masons strive for good, but our good works are seldom regarded as newsworthy. In any event, we have never been very forthcoming about just what it is that we do.

But the question arises, how do we treat these criticisms? They can be very troubling. Let me give a single example. There was a good friend of mine, who was very active in his lodge and in his Royal Arch Chapter. He was an exemplary ritualist, and there were some parts of the Work that nobody else bothered to learn, because my friend was always

available, and he did them so well. Eventually he joined the congregation of a religious denomination that gave him a lot of comfort, joy and satisfaction. But this denomination insisted that Masonry was wicked, and he would have to sever his connection with it if he were to continue as a member of the church. And so a few years ago he took his demit from his lodge and from his chapter.

For many years, from at least the time of the First World War, we Masons carried our secretiveness to extreme limits. It was the regular Masonic custom for us to refuse to debate with outsiders, and simply say, "No comment." One of the reasons for this was that we erred to be convinced that everything connected with Masonry was secret. The main point at issue is the fact that virtually every word of the Masonic ceremonies has been published hundreds of times since 1723. Presumably in most instances, at least originally, this was done in violation of the Obligation. But the main fact is that practically anybody, Mason or non-Mason, can go to the public library and learn all about the Masonic ritual. Now, most of our modern detractors claim to have carried out careful research. And so, if, after all that work, they have not discovered the truth, they must be incompetent. And if they have discovered the truth, and still say nasty things about us, they must be liars. Liars or incompetents — is there any other possibility? In either case, they need instruction.

At all events, Freemasonry has become a bit more open in the past twenty years. I think it really began to change after the Stephen Knight books. In 1984 the United Grand Lodge of England altered its traditional policy of making no comment. And I believe that many Grand Lodges have followed suit since then. A number of quite respectable books refuting the lies have been published in the last ten years. Let me cite just a few. There is **Workman Unashamed**, by Christopher Haffner (Lewis, 1989); **A Pilgrim's Path**, by John J. Robinson (Evans, 1993); **The Boy who Cried Wolf**, by Richard P. Thorn (Evans, 1994); **Fundamentalism & Freemasonry**, by Gary Leazer (Evans, 1995).

## REFUTING SPECIFIC CRITICISMS

We, as Masons, must continue to regard the modes of recognition as secrets from our point of view, and presumably decline to talk about them with outsiders. But almost everything else is fair game. I can see no objection whatsoever to quoting certain parts of the ritual to non-Masons. Let us look at some of the things we might say in response to specific criticisms.

**(1) Masonry is a Religion.** Our critics say that Masonry must be a religion, because it has many unmistakable religious features: the presence of an altar, with the Bible on it; the saying of prayers addressed to the Great Architect; the singing of hymns; the insistence on certain features of doctrine, including a belief in God and in the immortality of the soul; the promulgation of a moral code; and the use of candles and vestments. Moreover, it is a religion that does not embrace any of the standard Christian doctrines (such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement) — that is; it is a non-Christian religion.

Mind you, I should have thought that the Masonic ritual would be enough to refute this misconception. But if you want, you can find all sorts of Masonic authorities who say that Masonry is not a religion. In 1952 Rev. Thomas Sherrard Roy, D.D., a Baptist minister, and Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts, wrote some wise words on the topic. He said, in part that:

"We have none of the marks of a religion. We have no creed, and no confession of faith in doctrinal statement. We have no theology. We have no ritual of worship. We have no symbols that are religious in the sense of the symbols found in church or synagogue... Our purpose is not that of religion. We are not primarily interested in the redemption of man. We seek no converts...We raise no money for religious purposes. By any definition of religion accepted by our critics, we cannot qualify

as a religion... And there is nothing in Freemasonry that is opposed to the religion [a man] brings with him into the lodge' (Cerza, Anti-Masonry, vii, 141).

**(2) The Bible as Furniture.** The critics object to the fact that Bible is called part of the Furniture of the Lodge, and they say that this is insulting to the Holy Book. Clearly, they have not considered meaning carefully enough. The word "Furniture" here is being used in its old sense — that which is furnished. We must furnish a Bible to the Lodge, or the lodge will not be proper.

**(3) The Worshipful Master.** The religious groups complain that we use such terms as "Worshipful." When we address the presiding officer as "Worshipful Master," they say, this implies that we are to worship him, which must mean that we regard him as a God. Here, once again, they fall into error because they don't recognize that the vocabulary of Masonry is a precious heritage from our past, and that use words sometimes with the older meaning. "Worshipful Master" is an old term, and is used in the same sense as when you address the Mayor of a city (as we do in my part of the world) as "Your Worship." This doesn't imply that you are expected to worship him.

**(4) Great Architect of the Universe.** In the magazine The Presbyterian Record for 1986, one critic wrote that the Great Architect of the Universe was the name of the false god that "the Masons worship at their altar." He didn't seem to realize that the term was used by John Calvin, one of the founders of Presbyterianism. It was taken over from him by the author of the first **Book of Constitutions**, Rev. Mines Anderson, a Presbyterian minister, who saw that it was an appropriate metaphorical name to be given to God by a group of builders.

**(5) Light.** Or again, at one point in the ceremonies, the candidate is asked, "What at the present moment is the predominant wish of your heart?" and he is supposed to answer "Light." This is regarded as sacrilegious, because Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). But the word "light" can stand for various things; as well as the Grace and

Salvation of God, light is regularly used to symbolize knowledge, as when we say, "this sheds a lot of light on that question," or when we talk about the historical period known as the Enlightenment, or when colleges display the lamp of learning on their shields. Have you ever heard the fundamentalists accuse such colleges of sacrilege?

**(6) Prayers that do not mention Jesus.** Masons in their prayers do not mention Jesus. The reason for this is that those who are praying together may perhaps belong to religions other than Christianity, and it would not be appropriate for them to pray in the name of Jesus. But the religious critics say that it is improper for Christians to use prayers that do not mention His Name. I wonder. Are Masons the only people in the world that do this? As a matter of fact, Jesus tells his disciples, "After this manner therefore pray ye," and then proceeds to give what we call the Lord's Prayer, but which Masons sometimes call the Universal Prayer. It does not mention the name of Jesus. Or consider national anthems or patriotic songs. When the British sing, "God save our Gracious Queen," that is a prayer, and does not mention Jesus. When Canadians sing, "God Keep our Land glorious and free," that is a prayer. When Americans sing, in America the Beautiful, "God shed his grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea," this is a prayer. Have you ever heard the vociferous religious cranks complain about the national anthems?

**(7) Obligations.** What about our obligations? I mean, the Bible seems to be quite explicit on the matter of oaths. Jesus says in Matthew 5:34-37: "I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne; Neither by the earth; for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for whatever is more than these cometh of evil."

The problem here is that this quotation is being taken out of context. The Bible mentions all sorts of oaths, with no hint of censure. And commentators say that in the passage in question Jesus is talking about two particular kinds of oath, "unnecessary or frivolous



swearing," and "evasive swearing" (Thorn, **Boy who Cried Wolf**, 54). And in Matthew 26:63-64, Jesus himself replies under oath to the Priest that he is the anointed one, the Son of God.

**(8) Blood Oaths.** Or again, the religious critics often say that one of the terrible things in Masonry is the presence of what they call "Blood Oaths." You will recall that, up until 1964, the traditional wording for the penalties of the obligations in much of the English-speaking world had been, "Under no less a penalty..." This meant that penalties were a bit shocking; but I think that virtually every Mason who went through the ceremonies realized that they were symbolic, not literal. But in 1964, the United Grand Lodge of England, considerable discussion, gave lodges a choice of retaining the traditional wording, or else saying, "ever bearing in mind the traditional penalty..." Three years later, in 1967, my Grand Lodge was prompted to take action by what the English had done. But instead of allowing any such choice, it prescribed that the newer wording must be used by all lodges. This, it seems to me, ruled out any possible understanding. (I gather that some other jurisdictions have done what the United Grand Lodge of England eventually did, and removed additional penalties altogether from the Obligation). In any event, penalties were clearly vestiges of the past, and I should have thought that no rational person would imagine that they were intended carried into execution.

**9) Criminal Activities.** The critics charge that: "Masons have promised to help each other, even in criminal activities. And a Masonic judge will be lenient to a Masonic defendant." We could reply a little bit from a promise that is taken by every Master Mason, regard to his duty to other Masons — and this is not one of the notorious Masonic secrets — "my breast shall be the safe and sacred repository of all his secrets when entrusted to my care — at all times especially excepting murder, treason, felony, and all other offences contrary to the laws of God and man." Can I protect a criminal under terms?

**(10) Political Plots.** Or again, what about political plots? Is there an international Masonic-Jewish conspiracy? The promise that we just mentioned will likewise prevent me from subscribing to a political plot.

## CONCLUSION

My own view is that we have turned the other cheek far too often, and that now every Mason ought to respond to the attacks. In my own judgment, it seems to be simple stupidity, or malevolence, for some religious groups to claim that Freemasonry is a religion. It is in my judgment absolutely irrefutable that Freemasonry is not a religion, and is not in competition with religion. Without being vociferous about it, Masonry constantly reminds its members that they belong to a beautiful system of morality, and that they are ever to bear in mind the ideal of the Brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God. By this means, without in any way interfering with the work of the church, or the synagogue, or the mosque, or the temple, Freemasonry unobtrusively does its bit to support and reinforce some of the teachings of organized religion. Don't ever let anyone tell you anything different. And if you hear any of our critics, don't "Leave it to Beaver." Speak up yourself, and say, "I don't think that the allegations you are making are in accordance with the facts," or "I'm afraid that you are mistaken," or "Your prejudices are showing." Every Mason should be ready to defend the Craft.